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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BASRAH VOTER REGISTRATION WRAP-UP

REF: A) BASRAH 000070; B) BASRAH 000067; C) BASRAH 000058

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Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

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¶1. (C) Summary: Voter registration ended in Basrah on August 28, after a two-week extension to the original four-week period. Low numbers during the initial four weeks were countered by a proactive outreach campaign during the additional weeks by Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Director, Hazim Joda. Joda also alleged that Iran was to blame for the assassination of two employees on August 18. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On September 9, Poloff met with GEO Director Hazim Joda to discuss the results of provincial voter registration. The registration period, which began on July 15, ended on August 28 after two separate one-week extensions.

¶3. (C) Jodah stated he was content with the final results of the registration period. He admitted, however, that the low public turnout in the initial weeks had concerned him, so he requested that his Voter Registration Centers (VRCs) be allowed to remain open an additional two weeks and implemented a new outreach strategy to reach the public more successfully. (Note: The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) kept voter registration open throughout Iraq until August 28. End Note.)

¶4. (C) During the two additional weeks (August 16 - 28), Jodah sent workers from 9 VRCs (1 in the north, 5 in the south, and 2 in the west) out into public areas to proactively engage and verify registration information from potential voters. By the end of the registration period, 35 percent of the 1.5 million individuals on the registration list had checked their information. Jodah explained that this was five times higher than the percentage reached by the end of the original August 15 deadline. Exact figures were to be published by the Iraqi High Electoral Commission (IHEC) at the end of September.

¶5. (C) Concerning the August 18 attack on IHEC staff members in Basrah (REFTEL A), Jodah blamed the incident on external influences. He implied that Iran was behind the attack and explained that it took place minutes from the poorly controlled Iranian border. He said that one of the victims, Ma'ad Wahab, had received two threats prior to the attack and about ten employees received threats after the killing. Jodah suggested that the attack was staged to blame the local Sunni population, as it took place in a predominantly Sunni area. However, Jodah explained that Ma'ad himself was half Sunni and was "loved by everybody," a statement he corroborated by saying that both Shiia and Sunni attended his funeral. According to Jodah, the attack backfired.

¶6. (C) As in previous meetings, Jodah again complained that

local police were inadequate and corrupt. He accused them of "not taking seriously the threat against GEO personnel," saying he had recently sent a second letter to the Basrah Operations Command complaining about the police.

¶7. (C) Jodah told us he remains optimistic that elections will take place this year. He believes the fear of a worsening security situation will compel the government to hold them soon. He feels that voter turnout will be good if elections are held in the immediate future. He would not be so optimistic, however, if elections are much postponed. (Note: The recently-ratified provincial election law calls for elections no later than January 31, 2009. End Note.)

¶8. (C) Comment: The lack of an election law and growing contempt for the local government had contributed to public apathy in Basra towards future provincial elections. In spite of this, Jodah has resourcefully encouraged interest in voter registration. Whether this will translate into high voter turnout in Basra may depend on when provincial elections are held. The momentum gained from IHEC's publicity campaign may be lost if elections are scheduled too far into the future. This highlights the importance of Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activities in the run up to election day. The Embassy is working closely with the UN and IFES in coordinating GOTV activities and is encouraging PRTs to fund NGOs organizing voter outreach. End comment.

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